

group supported each other firmly in disputes with other property groups of the lineage, while the men of a lineage were expected to defend each other to the death in outbreaks of violence against other lineages. 593 578

Inter-segmental conflicts between classificatory brothers, or between the men of a sibling group and their mother's classificatory brothers, eventually led to division of the taravād. This could not, however, take place until the men of all generations senior to the disputants were dead. As long as the taravād was obliged to cohere, the formalities associated with age rank between men countered incipient tendencies to segmentary fission. Men were ranked by age irrespective of segment and generation, and the same etiquette of formality and partial avoidance was due an elder own brother as to an elder classificatory brother. Thus the etiquette of age rank not only reduced the dangers of open violence between individual "brothers" of any degree of relationship; it also enforced estrangement and social distance between full brothers, who in some contexts might otherwise have huddled together in unseemly amity to plot against their classificatory brothers in other segments of the property group. 593 561 578

SISTERS

Sisters shared many experiences and interests. They played together in childhood and often experienced the tāli ceremony together. As adults they cooked, swept, pounded paddy, harvested, and cared for babies together. Women were in some respects ranked on the basis of age in the same manner as men. All who were older had some authority over all who were younger. A younger sister was not permitted to receive a visiting husband until after one had appeared to claim her elder sister's or elder classificatory sister's favors. 593 [561]

However, the age ranking and authority structure between women was less formal than that between men. Women had no legal authority over one another. All women of a household were legal minors, collectively under the authority of the men of their household, represented by their kāranavan. Women had no place in the caste assembly and might not give evidence in trials. Disputes between women of different households or different lineages were not considered serious matters for public consideration. Women could not legally represent their households in relationships with other households, other castes, or political authorities. 593 562 592 [564] [623] [578]

For these reasons older women had only moral authority over juniors. They could not enforce their decisions except by appeal 593

593 to the karanavan. Even in relation to small children they tended to seek the backing of a brother to maintain discipline in the home. Old women who had passed the menopause had the greatest authority. They could move freely about the village, travel alone on pilgrimages, and wield influence over their younger brothers and sons. [562] But even old women in some contexts found themselves united with their juniors as a group of legal minors under the command of a male authority.

Under these circumstances the mutual behavior of women was intimate and informal. Their joint tasks, carried out in the confined space of the kitchen, encouraged this intimacy. Further, as natal kinswomen they were habituated to each other from birth. Unlike a woman and her daughters-in-law in a patrilineal household, their group membership was unitary and they experienced a continuity in major roles and loyalties from birth to death.

593 If she were competent, the oldest woman of the household delegated its tasks, allowing flexibility for seasonal variation and unusual 561 occurrences. Generally, girls who had not reached puberty ran 461 errands between houses, did small outdoor tasks, and played with their younger siblings. The younger married women shared the heavy work of pounding paddy, milking cows, cleaning dishes, and most of the cooking. Old women had pride of place in the kitchen and living room. They supervised cookery, occupied the best seats, and controlled their juniors' consumption of betel leaves, areca nuts, and tobacco from the family box. Elderly mothers took pride in serving their children and grandchildren with food on birthdays. In a large house young married women had considerable leisure and privileges. Through the day they took turns visiting the village bathing pool in couples, an event which gave opportunity for gossip and allowed them to be seen by (although not to converse with) the men of neighboring groups. [422] Old women proudly distributed the taravād's jointly owned jewelry among the young and marriageable women, helped [613] them to apply cosmetics and to dress their hair, and obtained a vicarious satisfaction from their marital conquests. For a few years—until she had several children—a young woman's life was gay and not overburdened with work. Women of childbearing age also had [84] periods of respite from the kitchen. They were secluded in an inner room for three days during menstruation and did no household tasks [844] for ninety days after a birth. In these conditions the division of labor was not strict and the segments descended from women were not segregated in their functions. Women wielded most control over their

591 shared a home with the wife's mother and sometimes with others of
592 her matrilineal elders. Twenty-four lived neolocally in a house con-
178 taining no natal kinsfolk of either partner; of these 24 couples, 7
lived in a private house acquired by the husband; 11 lived in a house
jointly acquired by husband and wife; and 6 lived in a house acquired
by the wife.

591 As these figures suggest, duolocality is still the accepted norm of
178 residence for younger married couples in Central Kerala, and avun-
culocality slightly less so for those in North Kerala. In both areas
participation in a market economy has caused a shift toward ne-
olocality, especially for middle-aged couples. In the North Kerala
village, however, the modern prevalence of cash-crop farming has
carried this tendency further than has small-scale urban wage work
[434] in the village in Cochin. At the same time, because of the coöperation
of North Kerala men in cultivation, the male sex normally determines
the pattern of residence. Couples live avunculocally, neolocally, or
even patrilocally because men must live on their land. In the Cochin
village, by contrast, the male shift from military to small-scale salaried
employment has only partially undermined the position of women as
the sex which remains on the ancestral land and for which the land
is cultivated by lower-caste servants. It is still women whose claims,
in the majority of cases, determine the choice of residence in Central
Kerala. Women, whenever possible, remain on their own land and
men adapt themselves to this condition by living duolocally, matri-
locally, or in some cases neolocally in a house partly provided by the
wife.

Kinship Relationships

MATRILINEAL KIN

613 The etiquette of behavior between matrilineal kin was traditionally
576 the same in North as in Central Kerala, but the emphases in terms of
rights and obligations were somewhat different.

The karanavan's ultimate legal authority was much the same as in
the Central kingdoms. However, he lacked domestic authority over
women and their small children, who resided elsewhere. Among
adults, avunculocal residence caused great emphasis to be placed on
[591] the unity of the matrilineally related men, who should coöperate
in work and property management for the good of the taravād as a
whole. Covertly, their relationships tended to be rivalrous and hostile.
Open disputes between them were often avoided through the separate
allocation of plots to individual men. The distance thus created be-

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121 like the cult of lineage ghosts, are non-Sanskritic. I discuss the three categories of
613 cults in that order, and then refer briefly to modern changes in the cults.

THE CULT OF LINEAGE GHOSTS

769 Each traditional Nāyar house contains a room devoted to lineage ghosts. Within
353 the shrine are placed small, low stools (*pīthams*). On each of these it is believed that
778 a particular ghost comes to sit on the days when offerings are made.

769 In property groups of the aristocratic lineages of village headmen and district
613 chiefs, which own more land than do commoner Nāyars, family histories recorded
554 in palm leaf documents may contain the names and achievements of twenty or more
[217] *kāranavans* extending back over two or three hundred years. In such lineages, whose
[778] property groups divide less frequently than do those of commoner Nāyars, the *kāranavans*' spirits are housed in a special building in the courtyard south of the ancestral house. Commoner Nāyars care somewhat less for their ancestry. Sometimes they have only three or four stools for their lineage ghosts and remember by name only those who died within the last hundred years or whose lives were in some way remarkable. Remarkable *kāranavans* are those who fought bravely in battles or received honor from chief or king, those who earned property on behalf of their matrilineal groups, or those who died prematurely through accident, murder, epidemic or suicide.

769 Regular offerings are made only to *kāranavans*, for only *kāranavans* hold legal
613 authority and only their names tend to appear in documents which survive for posterity.
782 On the advice of the astrologer, however, a *taravād* may, in emergency, propitiate the ghost of an ancestress or of a man who died before becoming *kāranavan*. But such ghosts are always those who died within the lifetime of living members.

769 The lineage ghosts are regularly propitiated⁵ on the new moon days of Karkidagam
796 (July-August) and Tulām (October-November). Food is cooked in the kitchen by
613 women of the matrilineal household, and a large portion is placed on a plantain leaf
261 for each of the ghosts. It includes curried meat and vegetables, fried paddy, beaten
782 rice, fruits, and sweet puddings of various kinds. Toddy and arrack were traditionally served along with the meal. If a dead *kāranavan* is known to have enjoyed special foods during life, he receives a large portion of these foods. Occasionally, even in the past, individual Nāyars have been vegetarians. The spirits of vegetarian *kāranavans* may not be served with meat and are housed in a separate shrine. When the dishes are prepared, they are carried quickly to the shrine so that the ghosts may partake of their essence before others have tasted or smelled them. The living *kāranavan* places the leaves before the stools in the presence of men junior to him in the property group and then closes the door of the shrine. Age-rank is observed in making the offerings. For each spirit, in addition to its own leaf, is briefly offered the food later placed before the stools of spirits junior to it. Similarly, the vegetables of vegetarian ghosts are first offered to meat eaters who were senior to them, and the vegetables (but not the meat) cooked for meat eating ghosts are first offered to vegetarian ghosts who were their seniors. After a few minutes the *kāranavan* reopens the door and distributes the food, to be eaten by all members of the *taravād*. Women take no part in offering the food and may not enter the ancestral shrine on this day. They are also forbidden to enter it during menstrual and birth pollutions, and all members are forbidden entry during the fifteen days of pollution following a death.

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000 Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the *taravād* might

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769 Raman Menon, however, records a legend of a mother's brother who deliberately
626 betrayed a nephew, whom he hated, to the vengeance of a lineage currently feuding
613 with his own.⁶ The nephew was to have been killed by his enemies on the following
[173] day. But in the night his mother prayed for the return of her son's elder brother who
was absent in a distant land. The lineage ghosts miraculously brought home the brother
in time to save his junior's life. It must be remembered, moreover, that the belief
that the deceased himself would become a lineage ghost capable of wreaking ven-
geance probably formed a sanction against intralineage murder.

562 Women are excluded from the ancestral shrine during their pollutions and may
[782] not enter it on the day of propitiations. The former prohibition is related to the whole
[841] concept of bad sacredness associated with emissions of the body, which prevents
[827] women from touching or eating with others or entering any sacred place during their
pollutions. That women should be totally excluded from the shrine on days of propi-
tiation seems also to relate to the general position of women in the society. As in most
of the higher Hindu castes, women traditionally played a very minor role in economic
production, for the work of production was done by the lower castes. A few women
were scholars, and a few were even trained in arms, but the Nāyars' occupation as
soldiers in general tended to exclude women from work outside the home. The bearing
of children was by far the chief value of women. Correspondingly, women were
subordinates in the legal sphere. They were throughout life under the legal guardian-
ship of men, might not take part in public deliberations, and might not act as witnesses
in the village court. The legal subordination of women may have been partly connected
with their comparative lack of value in economic production, and perhaps partly,
with the great moral authority they derived from childbearing—for female procreation
was very highly valued and male envy of these functions was overt. The cult of lineage
ghosts supports the correct operation of male legal authority within the *taravād*.
[769] The exclusion of women from participation in it, and their exclusion from the shrine
on days when their procreative functions were most apparent, perhaps expresses in a
formal manner the notion that the power which women derived from these functions
was polar and even antipathetic to the legal and economic power of men.

769 Although the lineage ghosts had only subsidiary judicial functions; their cult
613 served in several ways indirectly to maintain right relationships within the *taravād*.
626 First, a *kāranavan* who respected and correctly propitiated his own forebears provided
182 a role model of piety for his juniors in their relations with living elders. Second, the
ghosts, as we have seen, provided some sanctions against a *kāranavan*'s ill treatment
769 of his wards. Levy,⁷ in connection with the Chinese ancestor cult, has pointed out
176 the importance of having supernatural agents to whom a human authority owes
182 deference, in social units where the authority is not chosen by his subordinates and
cannot easily be manipulated or removed by them. For the authority's good behavior
toward his subordinates then becomes a part of his sanctioned duty toward his own
supernatural authorities. In the Chinese cult, which in this respect resembles the
Brahman, the head of a family must care for his patrilineal descendants because it is
part of his duty to the ancestors to provide happy and prosperous offspring. For
769 these, by their own later ancestral offerings, will save the forebears' spirits, and his
613 own, from suffering in the life after death. In the Nāyar case, the *kāranavan* must
626 keep his *taravād* in good order because if he does not do so the lineage ghosts may inflict
182 suffering on all, including himself.

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181 accumulating religious merit against the life to come. With regard to their interests in this world, the ancestors resemble their descendants.

769 Lineage ghosts are powerful beings who can help or harm the living. The effect which they exert on the fortunes of the living is much greater than that exerted by the living on their own. They can aid their descendants by preserving crops, cattle, houses, and children, but their punitive characteristics are those most emphasized.

[782] Offerings to ghosts are designed less toward seeking positive good than toward averting misfortune. There is no idealization of the ghosts as morally superior beings. They are human in their failings of envy and bad temper, and indeed, even more capricious than the living. They may punish wrongdoing with a degree of justice, but they do not look sympathetically into the hearts of propitiants, and are almost as likely to exact vengeance for accidental mistakes in the performance of rites as for wilful immorality. Nāyars do not attempt to enter intimate spiritual-communion with them or to please them by inner suffering and renunciation. Rather, the ghosts are bought off with gifts of food in order that their envy may be appeased.

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561 These attitudes to the ancestors¹² are, it seems, directly related to relationships with the senior generation among the living. A man's relationship with his mother's brother is, from childhood, one of stern discipline. All mother's brothers have authority over their nephews and in traditional households may inflict corporal punishment on adolescents. There is a marked lack of intimacy between senior and junior men within the *taravād*, and the sanction on a nephew's good conduct is fear of punishment rather than fear over loss of love. Good *kāranavans* are devoted to their juniors in a stern and dutiful manner. They are proud of their *taravād* as against the rest of the world, but they do not exhibit personal tenderness to their juniors. Power is vested in the senior generation; there is little feeling that a nephew could wield power over his uncle by withdrawing his emotional support. Great emphasis is placed on a formal etiquette of dignified and respectful behavior, amounting to partial avoidance, but neither party need feel that he loves the other in his heart. Nephews will not normally readily reveal hostility toward their uncles before outsiders, for they wish to preserve the dignity of the *taravād*. But they do publicly acknowledge hostility under provocation, and more frequently accuse the uncle of aggression toward themselves. That hostility is a normal component of relationships with mother's brothers is proverbial among Nāyars. They recognize this as the reason why a formal etiquette of behavior is indispensable. And even in spite of the stringent rules regulating the intercourse of mother's brother and sister's son, physical aggression between them may occur.

[626] In spite of the supernatural sanctions against violence within the lineage, I heard several stories of nephews who poisoned or stabbed their mothers' brothers. Aged *kāranavans* of large *taravāds* often complain of their loneliness. They may not behave intimately with their juniors and know in their hearts that they are hated and envied. "Indeed," as one Nāyar remarked, "in an old-fashioned *taravād* the position of the *kāranavan* is not safe." The office of *kāranavan* is, of course, much coveted. Junior men commonly number themselves off in order of age-rank as second, third, fourth men, etc., and with divided feelings await the demise of those above them which

[593] will raise them to higher rank. The relationship between older and younger brothers, own or classificatory, is only slightly less stern and formal than that between mother's brother and sister's son.

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562 The relationship of a woman with her mother's brother is less harsh than that

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between males, for a woman does not offer the threat of a rival to her male superior. Difference of sex, however, makes this relationship even more formal than that between men. Women do not appear frequently in the presence of their mothers' brothers. They occupy separate wings of the house, and intercourse between the sexes is severely restricted. Toward older brothers a woman's relationship is restricted almost to the point of avoidance. If she commits a misdemeanor, especially a sexual one, a woman immediately fears men senior to her in the *taravād*. Formerly, she might be executed by her brothers if she had sexual relations with a lower caste man. In an orthodox household today, a girl who becomes pregnant by a low caste man will be either expelled from the house by her male seniors or, at best, will be thrashed and will receive much subsequent harsh treatment.

It may be wondered why, since women are excluded from legal authority and from participation in the cult, ancestresses are believed capable of harming *taravād* members. The explanation of this, too, seems to lie in the content of relationships with the mother and other natal kinswomen. Women have no legal authority over their juniors. Indeed, the mother of a *kāranavan* is herself under his jurisdiction. Women do, however, exercise great moral authority over their children throughout their lives. In Cochin with duoloccal residence, the care of children under about the age of five is almost entirely in the hands of women in a traditional *taravād*. Their fathers have no rights over them, the *kāranavan* is too remote a figure to concern himself with details of child training, and junior men of the *taravād* are often absent from home. A mother commonly treats her small children with indulgence, but is necessarily also the source of many frustrations, while the maternal grandmother and women of her generation are strict disciplinarians.

In Kottayam, where residence was traditionally avunculocal, children were frequently brought up in the *taravād* of the father. In such households today, the child has an intimate, affectionate relationship with his father who undertakes a part of his personal care. When the father's *kāranavan* is also the mother's father (as fairly often occurs with cross-cousin marriage), he and his wife treat the child with indulgence. Otherwise, they tend to have only a slight relationship with him and may even resent his claim to temporary hospitality in their house. The mother is, in these circumstances, again the child's chief mentor and disciplinarian, and he learns very early that his mother's brothers, though living elsewhere, are the real authorities whom he must respect and to whom he will return at adolescence, as their heir. In both areas the reverence acquired for the mother is perpetuated throughout life. Her wishes and those of his elder sister take precedence over those of a man's wife, to whom he has a very subsidiary attachment. The relationship with the mother is clearly characterized by great depth of emotion and by greater tenderness than that toward male seniors. Even so, it appears that in this relationship too, the emotion is usually consciously ambivalent. I illustrate this statement briefly with reference to the relationship between only one man and his mother, but it is characteristic of many. This Cochin Nāyar, aged thirty-five, visited us stealthily in the evenings and kept his visits from his mother, telling her he had business in the town. He was afraid she would become jealous, and angry with him for eating Christian food. She watched over him, upbraiding him when he spent much time in the house of his wife and children. He took care to be prompt for meals, and although he found her food inadequate he would not complain in case he appeared to slight her cookery. He had had a high

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731 crop and cattle blight. These he continued to explain in terms of a childlike picture of powerful supernatural elders.

769 It must also be noticed that although there are slight differences in the relationships of men and women to lineage ghosts, the ghosts are, in general, far more alike than are matrilineal elders. A man's relation with his mother is very different from that with his mother's brother, and his relations with different mother's brothers are by no means uniform. Yet the ghosts are collectively regarded as both protective and dangerously punitive. It seems probable, therefore, that a Nāyar reprojects his own superego onto the standardized, institutionalized image of lineage ghosts which his culture provides him. For the superego, like the ghosts, is a composite of the prohibitions imposed by a number of elders. The superego is also formed in part from the individual's own aggression, which he defends against by projecting it upon the generalized parental image which he has internalized. If this view is correct, reprojection of the harsh superego onto ghosts in times of misfortune must serve to reduce guilt. For the offences which the ghosts ostensibly punish with sickness are often inadvertent or trivial ones, such as failure in the correct performance of rites. The astrologer's diagnosis may thus permit him to focus his generalized guilt (concerning deeper, unconscious aggressive impulses) upon a specific, minor lapse of duty on the part of himself or one of his kinsmen. He is then able to take practical steps to alleviate his guilt through propitiation of the supernatural agents. The Brahman's offerings on behalf of his ancestors also seem to serve as an alleviation of guilt, but in a different manner. For instead of reprojecting his harsh superego onto ancestral figures, the Brahman apparently projects it wholly outside the area of human relations onto a vindictive god of death, whose hell he believes endangers both his own and his parents' souls. He appears to alleviate his guilt through rites designed to preserve them and himself from this fate.

769 If it is true that the Nāyar reprojects his own superego upon the lineage ghosts, this would explain why the ghosts are so much more punitive than are living elders. 182 They are thus fitting agents for the infliction of natural misfortunes, which in fact 566 fall more heavily and capriciously than do the punishments of living elders. The fact that all members of the *taravād* are enabled to focus projected aggression and guilt feelings upon the ghosts probably enhances the internal solidarity of the *taravād*, by lifting a portion of these troublesome feelings from inside to outside the group. The cult thus brings together in rites of propitiation these very kinsmen who (in one aspect of their relationship) hate each other, and forges renewed bonds of mutual devotion in the appeasement of beings whom all of them fear.

FUNERALS AND ANNIVERSARIES: THE SANSKRITIC CULTS

76 Although they retained the non-Sanskritic cults of ghosts, the Nāyars long ago 184 adopted many Brahmanical usages in connection with funerals and with the anniversary of a death. Such usages include cremation rather than burial of the dead and offerings of rice balls (*bali*), water, and other oblations in the days following a death. As among Nambūdiri Brahmans, the chief heir, at the end of the period of pollution, enters a period of ascetic mourning (*dīkṣā*) for one year in Cochin and for forty-one days in Kottayam. At the end of this time he may dispose of the bones and ashes in a sacred river. He makes *bali* offerings to the spirit on each day of his mourning, and at its close, performs final offerings which unite the deceased with

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Funeral and *śrāddham* rites persist in a fuller form, but these, too, are often curtailed. This is especially the case in *taravāds* which have lost their ancestral wealth. Rice balls are sometimes offered only on the two last days of the pollution period. Only close kin, and not the whole Nāyar community, are invited to the sixteenth day feast. Often no *dīkṣā* is observed at all. Alternatively, twelve sets of *dīkṣā* rites, for the twelve months of the year of mourning, may be performed in succession on the sixteenth day. Often the bones are not taken to a sacred river. If they are taken, it may be believed that the ghost is thenceforth appeased and that no further *śrāddham* or ancestral rites are required.

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The role-structure of death rites has also changed. In most households only immediate younger brothers and maternal nephews, or the own children of a deceased woman, take part in the offerings, instead of the whole *taravād* as heretofore. On the other hand, women, as well as men, now offer rice balls to the ghosts of their parents or matrilineal elders. This reflects a change in the legal status of women, and the fact that women are now the legal heads of many recently partitioned households. In elementary family households, spouses now frequently observe death pollution for one another. At the same time, each may now even refuse to attend the funerals of matrilineal kin. Both in Cochin and Kottayam, the son of a man now often replaces the matrilineal heir as chief mourner, especially if he has inherited his father's property. Nāyars indeed say that "the rites go with the property." If there are disputes over the property, sons and nephews may dispute the right to perform the ceremonies, feeling that their performance gives the chief mourner the right of inheritance. Some men perform rites for both father and mother's brother; others, for neither, if neither bequeathed wealth. The beliefs which accompany funeral and *śrāddham* rites have also suffered attrition. In general, the belief that death rites are performed solely to give rest to the spirit is triumphing over the belief in the necessity to propitiate punitive ghosts. On the other hand, the Nāyars do not dwell on the traditional Brahmanical belief in the tortures of hell which await unpropitiated souls. Many state that they now disbelieve in any form of afterlife. These perform rites only as a mark of respect for and commemoration of the dead. A very few refuse to observe death pollution or to perform funeral rites at all. One educated Nāyar, for example—a medical doctor—stated that on the deaths of his parents he would merely cremate their bodies and invite a few like-minded friends to a meal to commemorate them.

Analysis. Behind these changes lie several separable though related kinds of change in Nāyar social structure and culture. With regard to changes in the cults of dead kinsfolk, the collapse of the *taravād* as a legal and economic corporation is of major importance. With the loss of collective legal responsibility which this entails goes a loss of the sense of collective moral responsibility. Nāyars who are no longer legally responsible for one another, who no longer share land, a common house, and a common destiny, no longer think it probable that their misdemeanors can bring misfortune to each other.

The collapse of the *taravād* is also, of course, accompanied by a total change in the relationships between matrilineal kin. Mother's brothers whose property is divided from that of their nephews no longer have authority over them. Indeed, the mother's brother is now often absent in his wife's house when a child is growing up and exerts no discipline over him. In any case the change which takes place in matrilineal relationships after a modern division of property is very marked. One man whose *taravād*

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who is racially inferior, belong to *her* Taravâd. The children of the inferior mothers are never brought into the Taravâd of the superior fathers. That is, they are never brought into it to *belong* to it. But they may live there. And where they do so, they cannot enter the Taravâd kitchen or touch the women while they are eating. Nor are they allowed to touch their father's corpse. They may live in the Taravâd, under these and other disabilities, but they are never *of* it.

It will be as well to avoid here a possible error that may have arisen from the statement that most of the clans may intermingle. Those of the same clan name may marry. The Nâyars of North Malabar are held to be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the river Korapuzha, 7 miles north of Calicut; so that a woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a man of her own clan name of South Malabar. There will be more to say on the point when we come to "Marriage." A Nayar woman of North Malabar cannot pass northward beyond the frontier; she cannot pass the hills to the eastward; and she cannot cross the Korapuzha to the south. It is tabu. To the west is the sea. The women of South Malabar are similarly confined by custom, breach of which involves forfeiture of caste. To this rule there is what appears to be an exception, and this exception is now having some slight effect, since of late years the world has come in touch with the Malayâli who now-a-days goes to the University, studies medicine and law in the Presidency town or even in far off England. It is that women of the relatively inferior Akattu Chârna clan are not under quite the same restrictions as regards residence as are those of most of the other clans; so in these days of free communications when Malayâlis travel and frequently reside far from their own country, they often prefer to select wives from this Akattu Chârna clan. This may have some effect on the status of the clan.

But the old order changeth everywhere, and now-a-days Malayâlis who are in the Government service and obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and taken with them their wives who are of clans other than the Akattu Chârna. But this is more new fangled than orthodox. The interdiction to travel, and the possible exception to it in the case of the Akattu Chârna women,

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784 has been explained to me in this way. The Nayar woman observes pollution for three days during menstruation. While in her period she may not eat or drink with any other member of the Taravâd, and at the end of it, that is on the fourth day, she must be purified. Purification is known as "mattu" (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannan or Vannan caste (whose *métier* it is to wash for the Nâyars and Nambûtiris), but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tiyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own clean cloths to wear (which is called mattu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child birth, or menstruation must be removed by "mattu." There is no avoiding it.* Until it is done, and it must be done on the fourth day, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a Taravâd by preventing the right person giving "mattu" to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal inflict deeper injury. Now the Nayar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of "mattu." My informant here tells me that the Vannan caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nayar women cannot go where these are not to be found; and that "mattu" must be done by one of that caste. But this is not the rule. I know from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranâd for instance, where the Nayar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tiyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in "mattu."
- [123] It does not account for the superstition against crossing water which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. As bearing on this point I may mention that the Nayar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river-backwater and come into the town.
- 564 The Zamorin is the over-lord of the Akattu Chârna clan, and with the decline of his power and influence, it may be that the women of it have latterly taken more liberty than was formerly possible.

* More will be said on this point when we come to describe the Tiyans.

writes thus in speaking of the Nâyars:—"When the man visits the woman he lays down his arms at the door; but, if there are no arms at the door, any acquaintance may visit her. To visit the house when there are arms at the door, or remove them, is death." Now-a-days a man leaves his shoes outside the door. Equality of the sexes in all sexual matters, the man and woman being on terms of equality, having equal freedom, is certainly an uncommon merit in the Marumakkattâyam system. Either party may terminate the union—even after one night of hymeneal bliss; and those who are unsuited to each other sexually, or in the way of temperament, in fact in any way, may put an end to their union and turn towards other partners. It may be thought that this liberty induced perpetual change, so it is as well to state here that it does nothing of the kind. Mere arbitrary divorce is very rare. Permanent attachment is the rule. The basis of the system seems to be that the Taravâd estate is held in trust for the support of the females and of their descendants in the female line. This trust is placed in the hands of the Kâranavan, the senior male member of the Taravâd who is the legal guardian of every member of it, and whose control of the Taravâd property is absolute. The odd feature in the Marumakkattâyam system is that a man has his nephews about him in the house, and not his sons. He lives in one house, while his wife and family live in another. That is, in South Malabar; in North Malabar they live together.

When we come to consider the degrees of relationship within which marriage is prohibited, we find the rule is that persons descended from a common female ancestor are not at liberty to marry. Those of the same Taravâd can never intermarry; but this prohibition does not of course extend to the children of a brother and a sister, who are naturally of different Taravâds. Again, the principle that "no member of the Taravâd of a deceased wife or husband (is) eligible as the second wife or husband is true only as far as the woman is concerned; for a man may marry a woman of his deceased wife's Taravâd. But he who does this is not in harmony with social sentiment." We find this observance amongst the forest Mûppans of Wynâd. In the case of a man's wife dying, I found that a Mûppan could not take another wife from her family.

The rule does not interfere with union between the children (or their descendants) of a brother and sister

- 635 was in Calicut,* and it has always been necessary for the new Zamorin to come to this fort in Calicut in a very formal manner. The residences, the kōvilagams of the various branches of the family, lie far to the eastward. The heir to the Zamorinship must make his formal entry into Calicut, for until he does so he is not, strictly speaking, the Zamorin. There is much obscurity as to details of the ceremonial, and I have not been able to note these satisfactorily, so will state merely so much as is undoubtedly correct. The new Zamorin comes to the bank of the Kallai river adjoining Calicut. There he is asked some questions, and he crosses this river in a *boat*—not over the bridge. Arrived on the Calicut side he must partake of some betel-leaf from a Māppila man dressed as a (Māppila) woman, or, as some say, from a Māppila woman† and he says that he assumes the title of Zamorin and rules until his uncle returns. The betel-leaf, received from a (Muhammadan) Māppila, which he chews, defiles him. He has lost his status in the caste, and he is supposed to be henceforth celibate. It would seem that this old world ceremony is likely to follow the track along which so much of what is interesting in India is disappearing. The late Zamorin never went through it, and he was therefore never, properly speaking, the Zamorin. He held the title perfunctorily, and he was the kārnavan of the immense property of the family; but he could not go "in procession" as Zamorin.‡ There are three unpleasant concomitants to the ceremony. It costs much money. It involves degradation in caste. It compels chastity.

182 The other odd custom is not one affecting merely an
 562 individual and a few with him, but it is a sexual one, and
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* There is now no sign of it, though the site is known.

† Those who say that a woman gives the betel-leaf say, very reasonably, that a Māppila man would never for any consideration or purpose wear a woman's garb. But, on the other hand, it is said the person is and must be a man, and that he dresses for this occasion only, as a woman.

‡ The Zamorin was in Calicut but once since he became Zamorin on the occasion of his visit to His Excellency the Governor of Madras in 1896, and then infringed custom by coming to Calicut without previously undergoing the ceremony. Owing to a death in the family he was under pollution and therefore unable to undertake the ceremony at that time, so he came by train. These old-fashioned customs, written or unwritten, take no count of trains. For example, the modern pilgrims from Northern India find the train very convenient when they wish to visit Rameshvaram. The penance of a life is reduced to a few days in a train. What would the old sages say! So the Zamorin came by train. But he could not go "in procession" along the road as Zamorin, and was obliged to make his visit as an ordinary grandee.

therefore one belonging to the community at large—in 611 562 ●
South Malabar, at any rate. The system of inheritance 182
through females as it obtains amongst the Nâyars,
relieves the woman from that undignified position which
she occupies throughout the civilized world as the
personal chattel of her husband. It gives her a relative
superiority, and she carries this elsewhere. Coitus haud
ita fit ut supina mulier viro morem gerat, immo etiam
supino viro insidens illa, facie in eum conversâ geni-
busque hic atque illic dispositis negotium illud perficere
solet. Hanc veneris figuram feminis ineundio rem, atque
idcirco ab iis vindicatam esse perhibent periti. The
well-known *jape* by which Iago hoped to arouse
Brabantio into activity would be altogether inapplicable
here.

Two more excerpts from Mr. Gopal Panniker's little 127
book will be made, with his permission, descriptive of 796
the other two most important national or popular festivals
of Malabar.

"THE VISHU FESTIVAL.

"Vishu, like the Onam and the Thiruvathira Festivals, is a 796
remarkable event amongst us. Its duration is limited to one
day. The 1st of Mêtam (some day in April) is the unchange-
able day on which it falls. It is practically the Astronomical
New Year's Day.* This was one of the periods when in olden [651]
days the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in Malabar
under whom their lots were cast, were expected to bring their
New Year's offerings to such princes. Failure to comply with
the said customary and time-consecrated demands was visited
with royal displeasure resulting in manifold varieties of
oppression. The British Government finding this was a great [648]
burden pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as far
back as 1790, a binding promise from those Native Princes
that such exactions of presents from the people should be
discontinued thereafter. Consequently it is now shorn of much
of its ancient sanctity and splendour. But suggestive survivals [182]
of the same are still to be found in the presents (explained [431]
further on) which tenants and dependants bring to leading
families on the day previous to the Vishu.

"Being thus the commencement of a New Year, native
superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn importance. It
is believed that a man's whole prosperity in life depends upon [777]

* See Madras Museum Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 57 and 58. [113]

Nayar
Tiyyar

FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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between mother and son was the most cherished relationship, while that between brother and sister came second in emotional strength. In all the exogamy of the unilineal group was sternly enjoined, and there was horror of adelphic incest. There was, however, evidently temptation towards it, since women remained under the partial guardianship of their brothers and might (invariably among South Malabar Nayars, occasionally in the other groups) live in the same house with them.

It is a commonplace in Hinduism that a woman is never independent: throughout her life she is under the guardianship of one or more men. At her birth all rights in a woman are vested in the men of her property-group, among Nayars and Tiyyars the *Adranavan* and under him other males of the group, whether matrilineal or patrilineal. These rights include the right to discipline her and, as she becomes old enough, to command her domestic services; they are counterbalanced by the obligation to feed her and protect her from harm. At puberty two new sets of rights are acquired by whoever is her guardian, in her sexuality and in the children she may bear. In the matrilineal castes the *ius in gentricem* is retained by the matrilineal kinsmen. Among South Malabar Tiyyars it is given to a group of brothers of another patrilineal lineage at the post-puberty marriage rite. In all these castes there is, however, uncertainty about the *ius in uxorem*, since the girl is not, as in a patrilineal Tamil caste, given over to the guardianship of one particular husband for the duration of her life. First, all the castes permit divorce and reversion to the brothers' house. Second, among Nayars, though a woman might have several husbands traditionally, she might conceivably have none, if she was divorced or failed to compete with other women. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, because of fraternal polyandry, many women must have remained unmarried. The *tdli*-rite, therefore, appears in one aspect as half a marriage, a ceremony made necessary by the strong incest-taboo in these groups and the uncertain nature of post-puberty marriage. In it the men of her natal group ceremonially give away the sexual rights in a girl. That the bridegroom does not receive permanent rights in his bride, but forsakes her on the fourth morning, points up the negative character of this marriage, as a renunciation of rights by the men of one group without the corresponding acceptance of them by members of another.

In all the groups certain ritual acts emphasize this reluctant renunciation by the woman's natal kinsmen. In the matrilineal castes one of her brothers, or her *Adranavan*, carries each girl into the marriage shed, bears her round, and seats her on the plank. This act is significant because after the *tdli*-rite a girl may not be touched by mature men of her lineage: taboos associated with incest prohibitions come into force from this date. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, again, the mother's brother, who after the father has secondary rights of guardianship and who, through matrilineal clan exogamy, is also concerned in the etiquette of incest-taboos, carries the girl to her seat. In the matrilineal castes, the girl's *Adranavan* asks the astrologer if the auspicious time has come, and signals for the *tdli* to be tied. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, as might be expected, the father officiates here. Among South Malabar Nayars, brothers of the girls first welcome the bridegrooms, wash their feet, and receive gifts of clothing in return. The underlying sexual hostility of the lineage's men to these necessary intruders appears on the fourth morning, when boys of the host lineage pelt the bridegrooms with plantain-fruits (recognized as phallic symbols by Nayars) as they enter the house to eat the ceremonial meal with their brides. Among Nayars and South Malabar Tiyyars, the *Adranavan*'s gifts to the bridegrooms when they depart after the 'divorce' signify his gratitude for their act of ceremonially releasing the procreative powers of his lineage's women, while at the same time dismissing them.

We note now that the *tdli* is seldom tied by the man with whom the girl will later cohabit as her husband. Among South Malabar Nayars the *enangan* might, after the 'divorce', approach her again as lover. But his status as ritual bridegroom gave him no prior claims: as the girl's

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626 was in a state of terrible fury. It was only with great trouble that they were per-
564 suaded not to excommunicate the poor man.

621 The Nayar life and customs can be rightly understood only in the light of their
178 village organisation. The enormous influence the opinion of the village has in all
matters connected with their social, as well as their family, life is the main reason of the
persistence of the Nayars as a vigorous and healthy community in spite of strong
economic pressure, merciless competition and fast changing conditions. It is also
due to this system of organised life that the customs of sexual relationship and
marriage, which look so loose and immoral on paper, are found actually to be decent
and tolerable. The Nayar community is not more immoral than any other com-
munity in the world. The restraining influence among them does not come from
actual written law, as among the Hindus of other parts of India, or from a belief in
any social philosophy present in the mind of at least the leaders of thought. It
comes from the strong feeling of social propriety which the village has developed
to a very high degree.

III.—FAMILY LIFE AMONG THE NAYARS.

613 The Nayar family consists of all the descendants from the same ancestress,
counting relationship exclusively from the side of the mother. Theoretically it
[425] may contain all those who have a common ancestry of this kind, but, in practice,
when families grow unwieldy, they divide the common property and live under
different roofs. Ordinary families consist of relations four or five degrees removed.
The numerical strength of the family varies. In old and aristocratic families one
finds sometimes fifty to eighty people, though one or two families can
be mentioned in Malabar which contain one hundred and fifty to two hundred
people.

The undivided family generally lives under the same roof. In the house itself
only the females live, while the male members of the family occupy rooms set apart
for them, or, if they are rich, live in houses in neighbouring compounds. The Nayar
35/ house has always a large piece of enclosed ground in front of it, which is called
613 *Muttam*. Often it is used as an ornamental garden, and no man of the lower caste
may enter it. There the children walk about and play in daytime, and the women
have their dance and general merriment in the evening. Behind the house is a
vegetable garden and a bathing tank, which is reserved exclusively for women.
[56] The dominant idea in the arrangement of the house is the proper separation of sexes
in the family.

613 The family owns property in common. What a private individual earns
42/ belongs to him exclusively, but when he dies it is joined to the rest of the family.
[179] according to the old Nayar law which is still prevalent in some parts.¹ When the

¹ Legal tendency has been to modify this practice.

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It is a point very keenly debated as to how far polyandry was prevalent among the Nâyars in olden days. During the last fifty years no trace of such a system has been found. It is to a certain extent true that there is extreme instability of marriage relationship among the commoner folk even now. But for a woman to have more than one husband at a time seems to have been against the moral ideas of the community even two hundred years ago.¹ Nâyâr ballads and poetry of that age contain many passages where polyandry is spoken of as a barbarous and unknown custom.

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But though strict polyandry does not seem to have existed at any time, traces of a system of supplementary spouses, very much like the Pirauru custom among the Australians, exist even now. In the *Enangar* or allied families, which we have noticed before, any woman of the same generation and in the same relationship as cross-cousin is eligible for marriage, and even if she is married, the young man whose spouse she might have been has certain rights—not distinctly conjugal, but still pertaining to it. He is the one who avenges her against insults. Her children call him "little father," and he has the right of entering any part of her apartments. Among the commoner folk a system of conjugal relationship may still exist. It is practically certain that this is a survival of the system of supplementary spouses such as we have in Australia and other places.

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In this connection it may be interesting to notice the general position of women in Nâyâr society. On a *priori* grounds we are inclined to assume that the position of women in matrilineal communities is higher than in patrilineal societies of the same standard of culture. How strongly this opinion is held will be seen from the fact that even in other parts of South India Malabar is spoken of as the "Land where women rule." It is impossible to make a general statement as to the relative status of women in matrilineal and patrilineal communities. But as far as the Nâyars are concerned, their women enjoy equality with men. They can hold property in their own right and enter the professions they choose. Traditions of scholarship and art are, perhaps, stronger among them than among men. Some of the best Malayalam poets and scholars have been Nâyâr women, and at the present day the statistics of female education show a higher percentage of English-educated girls among them than among any other Indian community. All the girls' schools in Travancore are manned by them, and some of them hold such high administrative posts as inspectorships of girls' schools.

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Polygamy was indeed prevalent, and is still legally permitted among the Nâyars. But this, in my opinion, does not show an inferiority of status. Though the opinion of Nâyâr women would strongly be against the wife of the Akikuyu chieftain who told Mrs. Routledge that she would like her husband to have as many wives as possible,² there is no reason to believe that the possession of more than one wife

¹ See Note 3 at the end. Appendix on "McLennan and the Nair Type of Polyandry."

² Among a Prehistoric People (Akikuyu).

jars on the moral sense of either the man or the woman. The idea that monogamy necessarily means a higher stage of culture is indeed one of those *a priori* deductions which, though incapable of proof, are still held with dogmatic reverence. Even the curious and very interesting fact that among the Mormons (whose great fault was polygamy, according to those moralists who include monogamy among the Categorical Imperatives), it was the women who fought most strenuously for the maintenance of this custom, which they considered to be their most cherished privilege. It is an indubitable fact that where polygamy exists it is the women who are its chief advocates. The men, on the other hand, consider it a great bother. I have heard many rich men to whom proposals were made for a third or fourth marriage say "sufficient unto me are the evils of one wife."¹

On the whole I am inclined to say that women in Malabar among the Nāyars at least enjoy, relatively to women elsewhere in India, greater liberty, with regard to individual conduct, family relationship and social life. This no doubt is due to the influence of matrilineal customs.

IV.—THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AMONG THE NĀYARS.

The marriage ceremonies of the Nāyars have always been peculiar. Anthropologists who have studied the Nāyars have, on the whole, failed to understand the significance of these customs. In this connection I propose to speak only of three chief points. First, *The Talikettu Kalyanam* (or the matrimonial ceremony of tying the Tali); secondly, the *Sambandham* (or marital relationship); and thirdly, *Polyandry*.

The *Talikettu Kalyanam*² is generally performed on a batch of girls of the same matrilineal family. The age of the eldest girl is generally eleven and rarely thirteen. The idea is that this ceremony should take place before the girl attains puberty.³ But it is not only the children of the same family that can have a *Talikettu* with the others. The daughter of a male member of the family who belongs to an *enāngar* clan or who is too poor to be able to afford the costly ceremony of *Talikettu*, can, with the permission of the village community, be placed in a separate seat and her *Tali* also may be tied at the same time.

When the ceremony could be performed, even when a girl is only six months old, it happens that in a *Talikettu Kalyanam* all the girls below eleven are disposed of at the same time. Therefore it takes at least another twelve years for a new batch

¹ See Locky, *Democracy and Liberty*, chapter on Mormonism.

² The *Tali* is a piece of metal, generally silver or gold, which stands for marriage in all the communities who acknowledge Hinduism.

³ Among the Nāyars social puberty differs considerably in point of time from physiological puberty. It is a matter of great importance that the former should precede the latter. Any family in which a girl attains her physiological puberty, as evidenced by her first menses, before she had attained her social puberty, is socially outside the pale.

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Malabar, where it is a creation of the Zamorin.

7. *Avin*.—The word means a teacher. He is also a head-man (*Karayimel Avin*), who has certain social functions in connection with the marriage and other ceremonies.

8. *Achan*.—The word means father. It is the title of the Palghat Rajas, the ministers of the Calicut and Cochin Rajas (*Mangát Achan* and *Paliyat Achan*), and also of several other old Nayar chiefs.

9. *Manndiyar*.—This is the title of certain aristocratic families in the Chittur Taluk near Palghat. The word is derived from *man*, earth, and *ndiyar*, earners.

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Among the high caste Sudras marriage is hypergamous, while the low caste Sudras are endogamous.

Marriage prohibitions. This is the general rule, though exceptions may sometimes be found. A Nayar is allowed to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, but his womenkind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called the *Anulomam* and *Prathilomam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulomam* from *Ann* with *lomam romam* the hair, going with the hair or grain. So *Prathilomam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nayar woman, consorting with a man of the higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of lower subdivision, clan or caste, she is guilty of *Prathilomam*; and if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted.

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The rule of *Anulomam* and *Prathilomam* is everywhere observed with great strictness. In many cases, Nambuthiris, Embrans, Pottis and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

1. Alliance between the people of North Malabar and South Malabar seems to be extremely rare. It is partly because of the principle of *Prathilomam* and perhaps partly that the Nayar women cannot cross the *Korapuzha* which marks the boundary between the two. Nor can the women of the extreme north of North Malabar cross the river between it and South Canara. The reason is said to be that the Kolathiri Raja so commanded owing to the fear that was entertained about their being captured and taken as wives by the Arabs. Similarly, till about fifty years ago the Nayar women from North Travancore and Cochin were prohibited from going beyond Quilon southward. These customs are being overlooked by the educated members of the community and it may almost be said that the custom has begun to die out.

Partly, in the extreme south of South Malabar a high caste bride-mates with a low caste bridegroom on the *Prathilomam* already explained. The husband cannot touch her without pollution, when she is engaged in taking meals. In the case of Nambuthiris, the same custom is in force and they cannot be seen, while engaged in religious ceremonies or taking meals. With the spread of education, official status, wealth, power, and influence, many of these time-honoured customs are fast disappearing.

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nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom retires to the bed room with the bride. 585
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This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkaram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast".

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term. The views of the members of the orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokus* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State. 585
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In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *kdranavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive 586
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marumakkathdyam of its one great merit, viz., that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathdyam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathdyam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.¹

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The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar.

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The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

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592 by the woman's brother or some other senior member as
[42] karanavan.

There are some who love and admire the system, and they depict the *tarawād* as a group of males and females bound together by the sacred tie of common descent from one ancestors' grand-mother. "The females have only to follow the natural instinct to be fruitful and to multiply, while the males, free from all care for their own progeny, are expected to labour like the honey bee for the common good of the *tarawād*-hive, and pour their earnings into the lap of the venerable *karanavan*, who, in the exercise of absolute discretion, administers the income for the benefit of all. Protected by the impartibility of the estate, refreshed by the acquisitions of the junior members, and under the beneficent sway of the senior male, the *tarawād* would rise high and endure through generations."¹ The advantages of such a complete joint family system are three-fold: firstly, the genial society it affords, the closest association of young and old, and the abundant opportunity for recreation and instruction; secondly, in the process of production many of the advantages of concerted labour are secured, as is obvious, without carelessness, dishonesty or misdirected production and consumption; and thirdly, there is the remarkable saving in the process of consumption. The freedom and independence of Nayar women, their influence in the family and the absence of conventional restrictions, such as child marriage, enforced widowhood and the other customs which exercise so baneful an influence upon Hindu society elsewhere are other advantages that add to the excellence of the Nayar system of life.

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592 The system above described, may have worked smoothly
82 enough in former days; but in these days of civilization, with
78 the growing wants of the members, coupled with the indifference and selfishness of the *karanavan* and the other members, the joint family tends to disintegration. At a certain point the mere increase of the members renders it intolerable for them all to live together under one roof, and when that stage is reached, the *tarawād* splits up into *tāvashis*, each containing a mother, her brothers and her children.

562] It is to the woman that the fortune of the family belongs, and yet she is not the mistress of the house but only one

of many joint members dependent on the *kāranavan*. The females and the junior members pass their lives in utter discontent and misery, if the *kāranavan* happens to be unsympathetic and tyrannical. The father is not the legal guardian of his children, for whose training and education the *kāranavan* is responsible. In families, where there are many boys and girls, the chances are that he educates none of them, on the plea that he cannot afford to educate them all, nor can he make any invidious distinction. The family, in certain cases, becomes the seat of envy, hatred and dissensions, and not a day passes without some dispute or other among the members. It is said that with the advancement of civilization the system becomes more and more unworkable; it offends against every principle of economy, healthy life and natural affection. By freeing a man from the obligation of maintaining his wife and children, it sanctions the reckless propagation of species, destroys the motive power for prudence and foresight, forces up the population to the very point where it must be kept down by actual want of means of subsistence. It "huddles together" as a family a number of distant relatives not necessarily drawn to each other by any bond of natural affection. It makes home life impossible, for the father is a casual visitor, and mother and children are but units in a heterogeneous flock, dependent on a practically irresponsible guardian, who from a mere accident of his being the eldest of the flock is expected to be able to regard every member with an impartial eye, and at the same time preserve the interests of his wife and children.¹ These causes are at work and tend to divide the families into several branches in the direction of *tivazhis* by partition. Fortunately, in the Cochin State, such evils as those above described are of rare occurrence, for partition is effected as early as the symptoms of disunion and ill-feeling among the members are visible.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 48.

464 The Nayars are the second in the list of the castes as
 564 regards learning, and only five per cent. of the population be-
 [212] long to the learned professions, but they are found in all
 departments of public service. The community is now avail-
 ing itself largely of the benefits of modern education, and the
 members are fast becoming conspicuous in every walk of life.
 In every department of the State, in all the learned profes-
 sions, they form a respectable majority, and the only people
 who successfully compete with them are the Brahman immi-
 grants from the other coast. Though there are extensive land-
 holders and substantial farmers among them, a very large
 majority of the caste-men are really very poor, being either
 petty farmers, agricultural labourers or day labourers, earning
 [357] wages at the rate of four to five annas a day. Even women of
 the poorer classes do agricultural work. Domestic servants in
 Hindu families are almost wholly Nayars, but none of them
 are artisans, weavers or potters.

264 The Nayars seldom eat before their bath or before worship-
 [575] ping in the temple close at hand. Their meals
 [777] Food. are generally three in number, namely, breakfast
 which is taken early in the morning, a midday meal between
 eleven and twelve, and another between seven and eight in the
 evening, but this meal is generally taken by children between
 262 five and six. The breakfast usually consists of *kanji* or rice
 264 gruel with some pickles and *pappadam* (round wafers made of
 the meal of the kidney-bean). Coffee is becoming popular
 [272] among the Nayars, and this beverage is now often taken for
 [556] breakfast in well-to-do families. They do not recognize any
 danger in the use of it, and individuals of all ages indulge in it,
 so much so that it is even given to young infants. The mid-
 day meal, which is usually served between eleven and twelve
 o'clock, consists of boiled rice together with a few vegetable
 curries; and butter-milk mixed with rice is the last course.

• [562] Their supper which usually consists of similar preparation
 is taken between seven and eight at night. The women take
 their food after the male members of the family. Only a mi-
 nority of Nayars are strict vegetarians, though there is no
 prohibition against their eating meat, fish or fowl.

• 252 In large aristocratic families, Brahman cooks are engaged
 556 to prepare the meals, but the serving is in some cases done by
 [357] the members. In other families, on the contrary, the cooks of

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114 his presence there to the others. I enquired from my informant, Panju, if this were still done. As in the case of other polyandrous people whom I had questioned on this point, he laughed heartily at the idea and said that he had never heard of anything like it. According to him, it was usually the woman who decided with whom she should spend the night; the others then stayed out on the verandah or in another room. Even in the older generation, he did not think that anything remotely resembling the leaving of a knife at the door was ever done.

When I discussed the point with one of the interpreters, he told me that in some polyandrous households that he knew, the husband who did not wish to be disturbed when he was with the common wife would leave his clothes lying about in the neighbouring room or on the verandah as a signal to his brothers. An old Thandan woman confirmed this one day when I met her at Shoranur, where she had come to be interviewed by my wife. She added, however, that there was no fast and firm system and that such things varied "from village to village". It could also be said, I suppose, that they differ from household to household. On the whole, however, there does not seem to be a more developed system of signalling in Kerala than anywhere else.

* 595 At home, the obligations of the men consist in making a living for the family in whatever profession or occupation they are engaged. Panju and Narayana cultivate the fields and gather the harvest, often assisting their elder brothers or being helped by them. The wife takes on the household chores, such as cooking and keeping the house clean; she also looks after the children as long as she is suckling them, which may be, in common with other Asiatic mothers, for a very long period - two or three years. The fathers will start attending to their offspring when the woman is isolated during the polluting period of her menses, and thus gradually come to know the children better and to influence their upbringing. Dominance at home is determined solely by the personality of one of the fathers, and does not follow seniority in age. It is however always a man who is the head of the household, the woman being treated here, as elsewhere among other polyandrous peoples, as the property of the husbands.

Does the woman enjoy living in polyandry and what are her conjugal obligations towards her mates? I put this question to Panju as I had to others whom I had interviewed in other communities. He was of the opinion that it all depends on how she feels towards the men. Devaki and Kuniyama, while being good wives to Mayadi in the first case, and to Raman in the second, had been bad ones to the younger men of the

This no doubt acted as a strong incentive for women not to create a situation which might lead to such unpleasantness, and contributed greatly in forcing the wife to conform to the rules of polyandry in what concerned her. 595*

Were there any illegitimate children in the Thandan community, and what was their fate if there were? I was assured that they would be considered bastards and outcast. It was also said that the man responsible for them might be forced to support them on complaint of the woman to the Collector. This was the only information that I was able to elicit concerning such cases, Panju declining any knowledge of them. The interpreter made it clear, however, that he was only thinking of the case of an unmarried mother. Should she have a child in wedlock from someone other than her husbands, it would be very difficult to prove adultery and the child would certainly be considered legitimate and that of the husbands. It was up to them to decide what they would do with their unfaithful spouse, should they be able to prove her misconduct. Actually, there were no illegitimate children to speak of in the area, my interpreter assured me. An unmarried girl expecting a child would most certainly find a young man or young men to take her to wife, and apart from gossip, nothing serious would come of it. He knew of a few cases like this, he told me, but he preferred not to give me further details, nor let me see them. He had mentioned a woman who had complained to the authorities in such a case, since this had actually happened recently. It was, however, a modern development which did not conform to the traditional patterns of Kerala Thandan culture. 848

I enquired also about prostitution, and was told that this did exist to some extent in the Thandan caste and in other, higher castes. The last war, with its influx of soldiers from outside, was held responsible for this state of affairs, but also the presence of European planters and administrators. There was little venereal disease, although the authority upon which I was told this was not definitive. It did not seem to me very convincing, coming as it did just after the statement concerning the causes of prostitution in the State. 548

Birth control was not practised since it was contrary to Hindu religious convictions. Abortions were rare, and it could be seen that the population was increasing steadily and unchecked. There was no female infanticide, and both my informant and my interpreter seemed surprised that I should ask if there were. Women were highly valued in Kerala, they said, and there was no reason not to want them. 842
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Feeling that I would obtain more detailed information concerning the 562

afterwards to remove pollution. The children in the
 marumakkatayam family belong, of course, to their
 mother's family, clan, and caste. They are Nāyars, not
 Nambūtiris. The Nāyars of North Malabar are held to
 be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those
 of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the
 river Korapuzha, seven miles north of Calicut, so that a
 woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a
 man of her own clan name of South Malabar. A Nāyar
 woman of North Malabar cannot pass northward beyond
 the frontier; she cannot pass the hills to the eastward;
 and she cannot cross the Korapuzha to the south. It is
 tabu. The women of South Malabar are similarly con-
 fined by custom, breach of which involves forfeiture of
 caste. To this rule there is an exception, and of late
 years the world has come in touch with the Malayāli,
 who nowadays goes to the University, studies medicine
 and law in the Presidency town (Madras), or even in far
 off England. Women of the relatively inferior Akattu
 Charna clan are not under quite the same restrictions as
 regards residence as are those of most of the other clans;
 so, in these days of free communications, when Malayālis
 travel, and frequently reside far from their own country,
 they often prefer to select wives from this Akattu Charna
 clan. But the old order changeth everywhere, and now-
 adays Malayālis who are in the Government service, and
 obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who
 have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have
 wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and
 taken with them their wives who are of clans other than
 the Akattu Charna. The interdiction to travel, and the
 possible exception to it in the case of Akattu Charna
 women, has been explained to me in this way. The
 Nāyar woman observes pollution for three days during

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menstruation. While in her period, she may not eat or drink with any other member of the taravād, and on the fourth day she must be purified. Purification is known as māttu (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman, who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannān or Vannān caste, whose *métier* is to wash for the Nāyars and Nambūtiris, but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tīyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own cloths to wear (māttu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth, which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child-birth, or menstruation, must be removed by māttu. Until it is done, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment, under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences.

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How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a taravād by preventing the right person giving māttu to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not, with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal, inflict greater injury. Now the Nāyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of māttu. My informant tells me that, the Vannān caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nāyar women cannot go where these are not to be found, and that māttu must be done by one of that caste. But I know, from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranād for example, where the Nāyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tīyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in māttu. It does not account for the superstition against crossing water, which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. The origin of the interdiction to cross the river southwards

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has been explained to me as emanating from a command of the Kōlatirri Rājah in days gone by, when, the Arabs having come to the country about Calicut, there was a chance of the women being seized and taken as wives. The explanation is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to have originated in much the same way. As bearing on this point, I may mention that the Nāyar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river backwater, and come into the town." It may be noted in this connection that the Paikāra river on the Nilgiri hills is sacred to the Todas, and, for fear of mishap from arousing the wrath of the river-god, a pregnant Toda woman will not venture to cross it. No Toda will use the river water for any purpose, and they do not touch it, unless they have to ford it. They then walk through it, and, on reaching the opposite bank, bow their heads. Even when they walk over the Paikāra bridge, they take their hands out of the putkuli (body-cloth) as a mark of respect. 823
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The complexity of the sub-divisions among the Nāyars in North Malabar is made manifest by the following account thereof in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "There are exogamous sub-divisions (perhaps corresponding to original tarwāds) called kulams, and these are grouped to form the sub-castes which are usually endogamous. It is quite impossible to attempt a complete account of the scheme, but to give some idea of its nature one example may be taken, and dealt with in some detail; and for this purpose the portion of Kurumbranād known as Payyanād will serve. This is the country between the Kōttapuzha and Pōrapuzha rivers, and is said to have been given by a Rāja of Kurumbranād to a certain Ambādi Kōvilagam Tamburātti (the stānam or title of the senior lady of the Zāmorin Rāja's family). In [776]
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there will be a specialist for diseases of children; an eye specialist, 759
an ordinary vaidyan who cures all common diseases, and a *mantra-vati* (hymn-chanter) who pretends to cure diseases by chanting certain hymns within himself, and who is believed in by the masses. There is also a *visha-vaidyan*, or expert in curing snake-bite, in some villages.

The Sub-Assistant Surgeons in charge of Government hospitals are, I am afraid, affected by red tape and carelessness born of security of employment and income.

In rural parts especially I am pained to note that their treatment is getting discredited, for the apothecaries take little pains to know the exact nature of the diseases of the poor persons who resort to the hospital and to prescribe proper medicines for the same. There are of course noble exceptions to this, but it is deplorable that there should be any irregularities at all in this most humane of all charities. The native vaidyans, on the other hand, have a local interest, their families living in the village for generations together and they are very keen to keep up their reputations; while the Government Surgeon is a bird of passage, who comes and goes, none of the villagers knowing whence or whither.

Malayalis, as a rule, are very clean, most of them bathe twice a day; their clothes are kept neat and clean. But there is much scope for the spread of modern ideas on sanitation in very many fields. At child-birth the mother is usually kept in the worst possible room in the house. Children too might be brought up in a more sanitary environment; the education of females on these matters is a very crying necessity. It is also deplorable that Brahmans are gradually neglecting the morning-bath and exercise on which their ancestors insisted. The local Muhammadans are extremely insanitary. They are filthy, their children are filthy, their habits too are filthy. 515

The habit of keeping the stock very near the house should be avoided. Again except in well-to-do Nayar families kitchens are in the houses; they should be in a different building.

Among the Brahmans, a girl has to be married before the age of puberty, generally 12. Among no other caste is this compulsory, though a few people, including the Indian Christians, marry their girls before puberty. These Christians are generally converts from low caste * Hindus, and change of religion has not changed their custom in this respect. 582 [797]

The local Muhammadans do not, as in the east of the peninsula, 562 observe purdah; their women freely talk to any person, work for others as coolies and stir abroad. Most of them are converts from low caste Hindus, and so there is no fanaticism, nor such strict observance of the rules of Islam as elsewhere. Nayar ladies are quite free, and among them descent in the female line (*Marumakkattayam*) prevails. Brahman ladies (not Nambudris) can go out, and be seen by others, but they are subject to their husbands and are not allowed to speak to Brahman men, and Brahman men are not allowed to speak with the women. A newly married Brahman bride is neither allowed to see nor to speak to her husband until she actually joins her husband after the nuptials. But these

* [M. L. K. Anandakrishna Ayyar, Cochin State Anthropologist, informs me that the Syrian Christians of Cochin are mainly the descendants of converts from high caste Hindus.—Ed.]

562 women can speak to other caste people, male or female, without breach of decorum. Purdah is observed among the Nambudri Brahman women.

312 Every house contains a well from which water is taken for drinking and domestic purposes. Water is specially good in the village since the ground forms a good filter. Wells are generally not very deep. Few people boil the water before drinking. Generally a raised mound is erected round the well to keep bad water out; nevertheless, during the rainy season water from the compounds runs to the wells with the result that the wells get extremely muddy, but the water is used without compunction by the people. Tank water is used only for bathing.

871 *Education.*—There are only three schools in the whole village, one for boys which has this year (1916) been raised to a high school, a Church school for Christian boys, and a vernacular school for girls up to the primary standard. The high school is a spacious building recently constructed at a cost of nearly Rs. 20,000. There is a prescribed code of study, and pupils are prepared for the School Final Examination which is conducted by the State. Brahman girls never attend the school after the age of 12. But all of them learn now to read and write the vernacular which is Malayalam in these parts, though the language the Brahmans use in their houses is Tamil, with an intonation markedly changed from the Tamil in the eastern parts. I subjoin below the strength of the respective classes in the high school and the girls' primary school. The Church school is maintained by the Christians in their church for their exclusive use. It is classed as a primary school.

Sirkar High School, Watakancheri.

	Hindus.			Muhammadians.	Christians.	Total.
	Brahmans.	Nayars.	Other castes.			
Form IV	17	7	3	...	1	28
.. III (a) ...	9	7	3	...	2	21
.. .. (b) ...	10	9	3	...	3	25
.. II (a) ...	13	11	1	...	3	28
.. .. (b) ...	8	17	12	...	2	39
.. I (a) ...	11	7	4	...	2	24
.. .. (b) ...	10	9	3	...	2	24
Standard IV (a) ...	7	10	4	1	2	24
.. .. (b) ...	10	7	3	...	1	21
.. III (a) ...	10	20	6	1	1	38
.. .. (b) ...	16	12	6	3	2	39
.. II (a) ...	6	10	9	...	6	31
.. .. (b) ...	7	15	7	...	3	32
.. I (a) ...	16	16	2	...	3	37
.. .. (b) ...	11	11	6	2	4	34
Infants (a) ...	9	13	8	4	6	40
.. (b) ...	9	18	6	1	6	40
Total ...	179	189	88	12	49	527

Note.—The Muhammadans are very backward in point of education. So too the lower castes of Hindus.

582 *Marriage customs.*—The custom of marriage before puberty is
837 prevalent among Hindus, excepting Nambudris and Nayars. The
Nambudris or Malabar Brahmans can give their daughters in
marriage at any time they like or not marry them at all. Only
the eldest male member of a Nambudri family can marry in his
own caste. All the other sons keep Nayar women as mistresses.
The eldest member can marry more than one wife, but many women
of necessity have to remain unmarried.

[428] The case of Nayars is entirely different. They follow a
different system of inheritance, i.e., descent through the female.
[586] The result of this system is that the female is at full liberty to
choose or to divorce husbands as she likes. The man also has the
same liberty. As a consequence of the different systems of inheri-
tance their marriage custom is also different. Before puberty some
person closely connected with the family ties the sacred string
round the neck of the girl. This custom is purely formal and does
not make them husband and wife. Nowadays this formal business
is done by the mother of the girl at the temple in the presence of
God. After puberty the man who really wants to marry the girl
(he must be of the same caste or some one belonging to a higher
caste, preferably a Nambudri) comes, and performs the real
marriage. This real marriage is binding only so long as he and she
will. Divorce can be had at any time by a mere word. The
woman can marry again. The death of the man does not make
[585] the woman a widow. There is no widowhood for Nayar woman. In
fact there is no marriage among the Nayars. What actually happens
is that somebody comes and lives with a woman for a time, then
leaves, and both live with others. The only restriction is that two
men cannot live with one woman at the same time, but one man can
cohabit with any number of women at the same time. The children
[428] born of such unions inherit the property of the uncle since the descent
is by the female line. Nowadays there is a strong opinion against
this system and the descent from father to son is advocated by the
educated few, and the proposed regulations in Cochin are attempts
to make marriage binding and permanent and dissoluble only under
certain circumstances, widows being still allowed to remarry.

With regard to all other Hindus, marriage before puberty pre-
[587] vails. But among the lower classes widow-marriage is allowable,
money for a bridegroom is not demanded, and even polyandry is
[595] prevalent among certain sections of the Tiyyas. But only brothers
can share a wife. A brother can marry his widowed sister-in-law.
Divorce is allowed in cases of serious infidelity but divorced men
and women can marry again.

562 *The purdah system* is followed by the Nambudri women alone
in Malabar. They cannot see men. Whenever they come out they
hold a big native kind of umbrella to hide their faces and come to
the temple, etc. The ideas about the purdah system among them
are changing nowadays and the abandonment of the system is
hoped for in a few years. The Nambudris are also advocating
changes in their marriage customs.

428 The property of a Nambudri or Nayar family cannot be divided
among the family sons. The eldest has the right to manage the
property and enjoy the profits. The other members of the family
have a right for maintenance only. When the eldest dies the next
to him in age comes to the position. In the case of a Nambudri

There is no infant marriage except perhaps among the Brahmans. 582
 Our girls are given away in marriage between the age of 10 and 12. Formerly it used to be younger. But strictly speaking this is only betrothal, the actual consummation of the marriage taking place only after the girl has attained womanhood at about 16 years of age. Our girls are very healthy and well developed so long as they remain at home. But their husbands take them away with them when they are old enough to the places where they are employed, e.g., there are three of them in Madras, and others nearer home. Boys are seldom married before 20 or 21 and the age is rising. Having to live away from home for their education their health is often impaired and they are less healthy and have less vitality and power of resistance than the girls, and are, in the writer's opinion, more subject to illness when away from home. Brahmans have to pay large dowries; whether they are able or no: the least sum being Rs. 1,000 for a bridegroom whose educational qualifications are measured by the Matriculation examination. Even 'ne'er-dowels' get a high dowry owing to the unsatisfied demand for bridegrooms. We are groaning under the tyranny of an effete social system which is ruining us. Yet our elders protest against any change in our social system, such as post-puberty marriage. Something is sure to be done to remedy this state of things before long: the social conscience cannot long stand it.

Among other castes there is no infant-marriage, nor the system of dowries as it exists with us.

Among the Nayars there is a curious marriage ceremony 585
 performed when a female child is only a few days or months old. Some male person, not necessarily or ordinarily the future husband, ties the sacred marriage thread around the baby's neck. This ceremony is purely formal. Real marriages take place after puberty, and the girl may choose any man she pleases as her husband, this marriage being not at all formal, and great freedom, comparatively, is allowed to the wife. Polyandry, which once [595]
 prevailed, has now disappeared.

The purdah system does not exist except among the Nambudri 582
 community of Brahmans. There are two families of Nambudri [612]
 Brahmans in our village. Their females can never see the faces of any males except their husbands and near relations. They seldom go out to any distance, except to the temple, never travel by railway, and hide themselves, when going about, with huge umbrellas made of palm leaves and bamboo sticks. There is post-puberty marriage among them, and only the eldest son of the family marries. Marriages are often exchanges of bride and bridegroom (i.e., a brother and sister marry the sister and the brother of another family), and in that case dowries need not be paid. Otherwise heavy sums are paid. The Numbudri Brahmans are noted for their simple lives, their Vedic learning, and their intense conservatism, though one very enlightened and aristocratic family near my village owns a tile factory at Shoranur and a large part of a spinning mill at Calicut. They lack western education. 556
 This year one Nambudripad (i.e., a member of the Nambudri aristocracy) has joined the Presidency College in Madras as an extraordinary student, to get the benefit of the lectures and the college life. He belongs to the family mentioned above, who also